

When the same thing shall have been done for the ancient architecture of India, we shall be in a better position than we are at present to form an opinion how far it is entitled to take rank as a really fine art, or whether the Hindoos are only heapers of stones, one over the other, adorned with grotesque and barbaric sculpture.

Had we possessed only picturesque views of the Parthenon and the Temples of Balbeck and Palmyra, we should unhesitatingly have said that the Romans were far greater architects than the Greeks. But the contour of a single moulding from the Parthenon would at once reverse the judgment, and proclaim loudly that we were viewing the works of a people who had reached the highest point in civilisation and refinement.

Although ornament is most properly an accessory to architecture, and should never be allowed to usurp the place of proper structural features, or to overload or to disguise them, it is in all cases the very soul of an architectural monument; and by the ornament alone can we judge truly of the amount of care and mind which has been devoted to the work. All else in any building may be the result of rule and compass, but by the ornament of a building we can best discover how far the architect was at the same time an artist.

No one can peruse the Essay on Hindoo Architecture by Ram Raz* without feeling that a higher state of architectural perfection has been reached than the works published up to the present time would lead us to believe. In this work not only are precise rules laid down for the general arrangement of structures, but also minute directions are given for the divisions and subdivisions of each ornament.

One of the precepts quoted by Ram Raz deserves to be cited, as showing how much the general perfection was cared for: "Woe to them who dwell in a house not built according to the proportions of symmetry. In building an edifice, therefore, let all its parts, from the basement to the roof, be duly considered."

Among the directions for the various proportions of columns, bases, and capitals, is a rule for finding the proper diminution of the upper diameter of a column in proportion to the lower.

Ram Raz says, that the general rule adopted by the Hindoo architects was to divide the diameter of the column at the base by as many parts as there were diameters in the whole height of the column, and that one of these parts was invariably deducted to form the upper diameter. From which it is apparent that the higher the column the less it will diminish; and that this was done because the apparent diminution of the diameter in columns of the same proportion is always greater according to the height.

The best specimens of Hindoo ornament we have been able to procure are represented in Plate LVI., from a statue of Sarga, or the Sun, in basalt, at the house of the Asiatic Society, and supposed to belong to a period between the fifth and ninth century A.D. The ornaments are very beautifully executed, and evidently betray Greek influence. The ornament No. 8 represents the lotus, seen as it were in plan, with the buds in side elevation: it is held in the hand of the god.

In the sacred books quoted by Ram Raz are several directions to ornament the various architectural members with lotuses and jewels; which seem to be the chief types of the decorations on the mouldings.

The architectural features of Hindoo buildings consist chiefly of mouldings heaped up one over the other. Definite instructions are quoted by Ram Raz for the varying proportions of each, and it is evident that the whole value of the style will consist in the more or less perfection with which these transitions are effected; but, as we said before, we have no opportunity of judging how far this is the case.

* "History of the Architecture of the Hindoos." By Ram Raz. London, 1834.

On Plate LVII. we have gathered together all the examples of decorative ornament that we could find on the copies of the paintings from the Caves of Ajunta, exhibited by the East India Company at the Crystal Palace. As these copies, notwithstanding that they are said to be faithful, are yet by a European hand, it is difficult to say how far they may be relied upon. In the subordinate portions, such as the ornaments, at all events, there is so little marked character, that they might belong to any style. It is very singular, that in these paintings there should be so little ornament; a peculiarity that we have observed in several ancient paintings in the possession of the Asiatic Society. There is a remarkable absence of ornament even on the dresses of the figures.